

# Abortion for victims of rape and incest?

## No: They deserve better.

The idea that victims of rape and incest want to abort children conceived in these horrible circumstances is one of the most common myths in the abortion debate.

Not only is it untrue that most victims of sexual assault want to abort their babies, the small minority who do are nearly always regretful.<sup>1</sup> Women who have been through these terrible situations are the only ones who know the truth, so let's let the victims speak for themselves.



### What do rape victims report?

- Two major studies of pregnant rape victims found that 3/4 of these women chose to give birth.<sup>2</sup>
- None of the women who gave birth said they did not want their children or wished they had aborted instead.<sup>3</sup>
- Of those who aborted, nearly half did so because of the demands of others.<sup>4</sup>
- 94% of women who gave birth said abortion would not be a good solution to a pregnancy resulting from rape.<sup>6</sup>
- 93% of those who had abortions said it “had not been a good solution to their problems” and they “would not recommend it to others in their situation”<sup>5</sup>

### What do incest victims report?

- Nearly all incest victims who had an abortion reported no input in the decision; instead, their

parents or the abuser made the decision for them.<sup>7</sup>

- All “explicitly stated that abortion was not a good solution and they would not recommend it to others.”<sup>8</sup>
- Of the 14 incest victims who carried their children to term, all were happy they had given birth. They also “unanimously rejected abortion as a good option for incest related pregnancies.”<sup>9</sup>

### Why don't rape and incest victims choose abortion?<sup>10</sup>

Victims of rape and incest generally believe abortion would be another act of violence committed against their bodies. Abortion is a form of “medical rape”—an unwanted, violent intrusion into their bodies. Victims generally have a heightened awareness of the value of life and respect for others, so they respect the life they carry

within them. Victims believe their child's life may have meaning or purpose they don't yet understand. They believe they were given this child for a reason.

Making it through the pregnancy is a way for a victim to overcome the abuse. The selfless act of giving birth is proof that she is better than her attacker. For the victim of incest, pregnancy is a way out—a way to expose the criminal who is abusing her and to allow her to begin to heal.<sup>11</sup>

### Should a person's worth be based on how he or she was conceived?

How we are conceived does not determine who we will be. One victim wrote, “I worried about the ‘genetic’ scares people tell you about: how the child could inherit the father's violent behaviors, etc. But I believe God has truly blessed my daughter. At ten years old she has learned more about giving love than many adults I know.”<sup>13</sup>

### Why do people say victims of violence need abortion?

During the battle over the legal status of abortion in the 1960s and 1970s, advocates of legalizing abortion used examples like rape and incest to lead people to question whether the “right to life” was really fundamental and inalienable. Once they convinced people to make exceptions for this tiny number of cases, they exploited and broadened this loophole until they got what they wanted: abortion on demand for any reason at all.

*“After the abortion, I wanted to die. How could I live when I had just ended the life of my child?”*

—Helene Evans

For many, the rape and incest exception is a way to avoid confronting what happened to a woman they may know. They may believe that by destroying the baby they can pretend that the attack never happened. But the pregnancy is a tangible reminder of what she went through—it forces discussion of a topic that they would prefer to keep hidden.

Even people who are otherwise opposed to abortion on demand feel they are being compassionate by conceding that abused women should be allowed to have abortions. Since no one would ever want to be raped, these people mistakenly believe rape victims would want to abort this reminder of the rape. But the truth is that many women who have been through the trauma of rape or incest tell us the baby was the only good that came out of the experience.



Even more importantly, that child should not be punished because of the crimes of his or her father. Yes, the child was conceived in violence, but each child is a unique person deserving of human rights. We can never justify the killing of an innocent human being, even in cases of rape and incest.

## What do rape and incest victims say about abortion?<sup>14</sup>

“I was an innocent victim of a horrible crime. I was not to blame for what the rapist did to me. But in choosing to abort, to kill the innocent child growing within me, I lowered myself to the level of the rapist.”

“*Patricia Ryan*”

“Abortion on demand, no questions asked, makes it easier for incest and child abuse to continue. Abortion for incest victims sounds compassionate, but in practice it is simply another violent and deceptive tool in the hand of the abuser.”

“*Mary Jane Doe*”

“After the abortion, I wanted to die. How could I live when I had just ended the life of my child? The negative feelings resulting from the rape were not eliminated by the abortion. Nothing was solved; instead, the grief was now doubled.”

*Helene Evans*

“I never wished that my son had never been born. He was the only good thing about the rape. It gave me comfort to think of making some other couple happy. If I had taken his life there would have been no good.”

“*Connie Sellers*”

“Like any woman in a crisis pregnancy, a pregnant sexual assault victim might welcome an instant answer to her problem. But abortion is too permanent an answer to a temporary problem. Abortion may sound compassionate—even noble—but it isn’t.”

*Lee Ezell*

“Thank you, Lee. In protecting my life, despite the hardships it caused you, you saved not just me, but countless generations to come.”

*Julie Makimaa, daughter of Lee Ezell*

NOTE: The women pictured in this document are not actual crime victims.

## People who say victims of rape and incest need abortion haven’t asked the victims themselves.

The assumption that victims of rape and incest want and need abortion is one of the most common misconceptions in the abortion debate.

Abortion is not a solution to the heartbreak and pain that come with rape and incest—in fact, it often makes them worse.

Read what real women who have been through rape and incest have to say about their experience. Often they find that keeping their baby is the only good to come out of a horrible situation.

Victims of rape and incest deserve help and healing—not abortion.

### References

1. David C. Reardon, Julie Makimaa, and Amy Sobie, eds., *Victims and Victors: Speaking Out about Their Pregnancies, Abortions, and Children Resulting from Sexual Assault* (Springfield, IL: Acorn Books, 2000), 21. • 2. Sandra Mahkorn, “Pregnancy and Sexual Assault.” *The Psychological Aspects of Abortion* (Mall and Watts 1979), 53-72.
3. Reardon, et al., 22. • 4. Ibid., 20. • 5. Ibid., 20. • 6. Ibid., 22.
7. Ibid., 21, 115. • 8. Ibid., 21. • 9. Ibid., 22. 10. Ibid., 14-15.
11. Ibid., 118. • 12. Feminists for Life of America, “Pro-Woman Answers to Pro-Choice Questions: What About Rape?” <http://www.feministsforlife.org/Q&A/Q2.htm>. • 13. Reardon, et al., 82.
14. Excerpted from Reardon, et al., 52-46, 119.

### For further reading


David C. Reardon, Julie Makimaa, and Amy Sobie, eds. *Victims and Victors: Speaking Out about Their Pregnancies, Abortions, and Children Resulting from Sexual Assault*. Springfield, IL: Acorn Books, 2000.

The American Feminist. “Pro-Woman Answers to Pro-Choice Questions,” *Feminists for Life of America* (2005), <http://feministsforlife.org/taf/2005/PWA2005.pdf>

David C. Reardon. *Aborted Women: Silent No More*. Springfield, IL: Acorn Books, 2002.

The Elliot Institute: <http://afterabortion.org/>

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